

Peer Review

# Review of: "Approaches for Measuring Socioeconomic Status in Health Studies in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Scoping Review"

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This is a methodologically sound scoping review that will be useful to all social epidemiologists with an interest in African health status. It accurately describes how SES has been measured in all the studies identified by the authors, using a reliable search strategy.

I have no criticisms of the article. The authors correctly point out that such a scoping review would not be expected to assess the quality of the primary studies identified/selected for detailed commentary. However, it is worth their commenting on the most frequent methodological weakness in this field - the use of cross-sectional/survey study designs, often involving self-reported SES information from survey responses. There are two weaknesses to this relatively easy and inexpensive study design for assessing actual socioeconomic gradients in health: 1) Cross-sectional studies are often subject to reverse causation, in this case involving a chronic disabling health condition (e.g., HIV/TB) leading to downward social mobility and consequent poverty due to diminished labour market participation; 2) Reliance on self-reported survey responses about health necessarily means that only health conditions can be studied for which there is a clear local vernacular term and accurate patient knowledge of the true diagnosis – this means that frequently under-diagnosed/"silent" conditions, such as Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, early-stage HIV, TB, and Hepatitis B/C infections, to name only a few examples, cannot be accurately assessed for their frequency using self-report in surveys.

Even if the authors deem these points beyond the ambit of their scoping review, it is a worthy contribution to a very thin literature, as is.

## Declarations

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.